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SUBJECT: NPP Campaign Strategy Unfolding

REF: 07 Accra 2599

11. SUMMARY. In a February 26 meeting with Poloff and visiting Ghana Desk Officer Dana Banks, New Patriotic Party (NPP) General Secretary Nana Oheh Ntow outlined the party's campaign strategy of focusing on the government's record of accomplishments, managing communication issues, and targeting women and youth. Ntow said the party faces fundraising and public relations challenges, and has some concerns over Election Day security. Returning from a recent trip as a participant in an International Visitor (IV) program on the U.S. political primary process, Ntow said he favors expanding voter participation in future NPP primaries and requested additional U.S. support for training party staff. END SUMMARY

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NPP Campaign Emphasizes Government's Accomplishments  
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12. General Secretary Ntow indicated the current NPP focus is on delivering its campaign message - "NPP has the record and the vision" - to the people. Ntow believes focusing on the government's record of accomplishments over the past eight years, highlighting progress in education, infrastructure development, social policies, and economic growth, as well as the party's vision for spreading the benefits of growth across the population, will propel NPP to victory. The NPP campaign strategy is focused on outreach to women and youth, and on developing a strong communications plan. As part of the party's demonstration of unity, the NPP will also establish campaign working committees, which will be chaired by the 16 former presidential aspirants. Ntow expressed comfort with the progress of party unification following the contentious December 2007 Congress (reftel), stating unity and collaboration exists among the former presidential hopefuls. He admitted additional work was needed to transfer the same degree of cohesion to local levels of NPP supporters.

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NPP Faces Financial, Security and PR Challenges  
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13. Relations between the NPP and the chief opposition party National Democratic Congress (NDC) remain contentious. Ntow views combating the NDC's "campaign of lies" as the NPP's primary challenge in the coming months. According to Ntow, if the public debate remains centered on substantive issues and government performance, the NPP will be a clear winner in December. The NPP also cites challenges in raising sufficient campaign funds, and Ntow indicated that the party plans to engage former presidential aspirants in fundraising. Ntow noted that Election Day security represents another area of concern, claiming NPP supporters face frequent intimidation, particularly outside the main urban areas. He expressed hope that the military would play a stronger role during the elections, stating police do not command the popular respect necessary to quell intimidation and violence.

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Ntow Supports Expansion of Future Primaries  
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¶4. Ntow said he plans to propose the NPP expand participation in future presidential primaries to all registered party members. Based on his experience with the December 2007 International Visitors Program on the U.S. electoral process, Ntow said he believes transforming political primaries into "national elections" would ensure the party flag bearer carries broader public support and would reduce the campaign's financial burden. [NOTE: Party delegates from each district currently elect the NPP flag bearer. A previous proposal to expand voter participation in primaries was not adopted by NPP leadership. END NOTE]

¶5. Ntow requested U.S. financial assistance for democracy building and political party development, citing a specific need to train party leaders and conduct outreach with members across the country.

¶6. COMMENT. Despite Ntow's claims of internal NPP cohesion following the bitter party convention, it appears that substantial divisions continue to fester within the NPP. Some observers view the assignment of former presidential aspirants to election committee chairmanship as simply a public relations strategy, and significant divisions remain among the former candidates. There have been press rumors that Alan Kyerematen, who was President Kufour's candidate and the second-place finisher in the primary, may launch an independent bid for president, and indications that supporters of NPP flagbearer Nana Akufo Addo are targeting four parliamentary seats currently held by Kyerematen supporters. END COMMENT

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